

AIR WAR COLLEGE

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EUROPE IN CRISIS

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ABSTRACT

This research paper explores the broad structure of radicalization and impact that it has within the European community, as part of the migration, immigration, and influx of refugees and Islamist State fighters returning from Libya, Syria, and Iraq after being pushed back or out of ISIS strongholds. This paper argues that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is the only activity capable of leading and coordinating efforts to handle the current Syrian refugee crisis and providing intelligence assistance to member countries in the European Union (EU) of foreign fighters returning from the battlefields of Libya, Syria and Iraq infiltrating into the fabric of Europe. At the tip of this problem are sleeper cells that have the opportunity to continue the fight carrying out terrorist acts against targets within the EU at will as part of the Islamist state's regional and global theater strategy. The paper discusses the magnitude of the problem facing Europeans currently, attempts to mitigate security concerns, and presents a case for reversing the current negative trend while addressing both European and US national security interests. The paper defines the core problem outside of the internal EU itself linking it to radical Islamist groups and the Islamist state in Muslim countries and failed states in the Middle East where only an organization such as NATO is capable of reversing the trend in Europe. The paper will explore the significance of foreign extremist organizations, Islamist ideologues and their network of overseas recruitment and training that lead to radicalization. The paper will explore several tangible and intangible factors that negatively affect Muslim assimilation into EU countries that lead to radicalization and may further alienate Muslim communities in countries such as France and Germany to include the United States. Finally, the paper will look at ways in which to reverse the current trends, and offer ways that might be employed to respond to the problem

offering short and long-term policy solutions that address socio-politico-economic conditions in which ‘terrorism’ exists.



Introduction

A car crossing the Westminster Bridge veers off the road and plows straight into an unsuspecting crowd. The car continues on through more pedestrians and eventually crashes into a fence adjoining the Palace of Westminster. The driver jumps out and continues around the corner swinging knives, stabbing pedestrians as he continues on. The perpetrator, Khalid Masood, is taken down but not until fatally wounding a British security guard as he stormed through the gate into the Parliament courtyard. This is another in a series of terrorist attacks performed by radical Islamists and radical Islamist groups across Europe in the past several years that are becoming more and more prevalent. The difference in this one is that it was carried out by a British born Muslim that became radicalized overseas, returned to Britain and remained dormant until he committed the heinous attack days ago.

Radical Islamist attacks are on the rise France, Belgium, Germany, and now Britain. From the recent attempt of an unidentified suspect swinging a machete near the Louvre in Paris, the Paris attacks in 2015 that killed 130 people injuring hundreds more, to the attacks on the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo, a kosher Paris grocery store, in the Paris suburb of Montrouge, and when a radicalized Tunisian plowed a commercial truck into a crowded Promenade des Anglais in Nice during Bastille Day in 2016 killing 86 while injuring 200 more, a state of emergency has existed in France while tourism, normally robust has fallen significantly over the past two years. One could conclude from this series of recent violent attacks that terrorist groups, networking cells, and individual radicalized terrorists are becoming more active and emboldened in across Europe.

The Islamist State (ISIS), as Dr. Sebastian Gorka has outlined recently on a news show, views westerners as infidels that should either be beheaded or convert to Islam. This blatant reality that the western world now faces is becoming increasingly complex and requires deep understanding in order to form effective solutions. Security in Europe is the top priority for the European Union. The current reality of terrorism in Europe needs to be addressed in a strategic way that ensures all European citizens feel secure and protected. How should this problem be approached? How should European Union security be shaped in response to the Syrian refugee crisis? Is this a national problem with national solutions? Is there an international organization equipped to deal with the current reality? Is this a wicked problem that transcends boundaries of the Schengen zone?



Thesis

NATO is the only international organization that can manage the Syrian refugee security crisis causing problems for the EU from root to branch because NATO is the only organization already set up and able to employ the strategic and tactical resources against the core radicalized transnational threat. NATO's intelligence capabilities are more robust than many EU member nations. The EU looks to NATO for security. NATO has experience most recently in Afghanistan and Syria in external military operations related to dealing with non-state terrorist groups. NATO is already cooperating with Jordan in areas such as cyber defense and countering road side bombs, along with recently launching a training program in Iraqi security forces to counter improvised explosive devices (IED).¹ They could expand capabilities to support EU efforts in other areas such as law enforcement, intelligence sharing, border security, vetting procedures from Middle Eastern countries of origin, and supporting the EU to counter national radicalized threats.

Europe in Crisis

Europe's Challenge

The European Union cannot effectively deal with the current terrorist threat facing it today. The economic model designed to unify Europe under a single market with a single currency creating a European Union identity in a globalized world has failed. Europeans are tired of the mass immigration, Islamization, within European Union (EU) policy and rules that allow migrants, refugees, and returning foreign fighters to manipulate the rules for seeking asylum within the Union.² Resources and infrastructure are significant challenges within an EU unable to handle and support an expanded capacity of migrants and refugees. Reduction of resources that are a part of the Eurozone bailing out countries such as Greece, and Germany's failure to give up its opposition to jointly guaranteed Eurozone debt instruments and common deposit insurance put further pressure on a fragile economy.³ In Belgium and France, failure to work toward integration of Muslim populations have directly created problems with foreign migrants and refugees. High unemployment rates in neighborhoods like Molenbeek in Brussels or no-go zones in Paris segregated from French society exacerbate the growing problem. The state of Belgium is working with Muslim communities, but there is no integration by the police into neighborhoods.⁴ Within all of this a terrorist element supported by returning foreign fighters has entrenched itself into the fabric of Britain, France, Belgium, and Germany.

Origins of the Crisis

Europe's current crisis can be traced to the 1980's with creation of the single market and currency in 1986 that sowed the seeds of Europe's current crisis.⁵ Economic concerns created

massive unemployment and a chasm of debt for several countries. Leaders brought about a monetary union without a fiscal and financial union, leaving countries like Greece and Italy vulnerable after the 2008 Great Recession.⁶ Dwindling defense budgets, the 2 percent NATO contribution, and a German led economic structure add complexity to the real issues EU faces with border security, migrants and refugees, and radical Islamist cells operating within the very structure of its member states. In addition, authorities in Britain have been aware since at least 2001 that terrorists fraudulently use state benefits to fund terrorist activity.⁷

The economic competition at all levels as part of the classic liberal vision and structure envisioned by Europeans threatens their liberty. In 2015 more than one million migrants and refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and sub-Saharan Africa poured across Europe's borders.⁸ The EU did not have a mechanism to deal with sudden movements of people, nor did the EU have any common external migration policy to help absorb a large influx of refugees.⁹ As capital moved where wages were low, bidding them up, workers moved and are continually moving where wage rates are high, bidding them down.¹⁰

The single market European economy allowing the movement of wealth, technology, ideas, and labor has contributed to high unemployment rates for migrants and refugees trying to integrate into new societies. Globalization is a significant contributing factor in all of this. For example, youth unemployment is nearly 50% in Greece, 45% in Spain, and around 40% in Italy along with ongoing political crisis over immigration, the EU has been brought to the brink of disintegration.¹¹ Once Poland joined the EU in 2004, millions of eastern Europeans headed west in search of better jobs and prosperity ending up in Britain and Germany. Additionally, aging populations place an ever increasing strain on the ability of states to provide social and health benefits along with paying pensions. Free flow of capital, people, and goods in Europe due to

globalization have created gaps between winners and losers of the global market economy. If that's not enough, this adds to young out-of-work migrants and refugee's susceptibility to influence from terrorist networks recruiting tactics that work to radicalize those frustrated with a society that doesn't necessarily look favorably on them.

The European Union

The EU is concerned with security, prosperity, democracy, and order. There is no formal agreement to a global strategy within the EU; however, they want to be a global player economically, and defense is focused on capability building.¹² The immigration and refugee issue seen as one for individual nations to deal with, not one for EU or NATO to be involved in.¹³ The EU Defense budget has been steadily dropping by overall 14.5% from 2007 thru 2016 while the EU military has been downsizing.¹⁴ Without a program to allocate defense funding, track expenditures and no synergy out of individual interests creates a level of complexity that prevents the EU from seriously dealing with the broader threat of radicalized terrorist activities at a supranational level.

Implementing any counter terrorism policy within the EU requires consensus of all 27 nation states. Especially true within the context of using military weapons to counter existential threats in the form of returning foreign fighters or radicalized terror cells from Libya or Sub-Sahara Africa. Consensus is difficult as there are multiple national interests among the members on a host of different topics and issues to vet and synthesize. You cannot look at policies and issues from a single lens, but need to see things from how multiple member states see their world in relation to any particular topic.¹⁵ Nothing can be implemented unless everyone agrees, and getting everyone to agree is very complicated. This adds yet another layer of complexity to the political dynamics working within the fabric of the EU to effectively deal with security threats.

The EU cannot effectively fend off radicalized violent terrorist security threats working the way they currently do. Missions cannot be performed without consensus and resources belong to individual member states, not the EU as a national entity.¹⁶ This situation is similar to living in another galaxy because of the different interpretations of policy or issues from 27 member state perspectives that make things complex and complicated.¹⁷ Bureaucratic framework within the EU further threatens security constraining them both politically and legally.¹⁸ Consensus often results in the EU appearing to be doing something, but not really doing anything wholly dependent on resource contributions from individual nation states.

The EU doesn't have any hard power and will continue to muddle through internal and external security issues. Military decisions are highly politicized and it becomes a matter of managing events, the media, and individual member states.¹⁹ The flag of operations whether European nation-states, the EU, or North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has significant effect on regional politics within an already bureaucratic system not set-up for countering terrorist threats. Operating like this, the EU can't effectively counter terrorist threats in an environment where it takes significant bureaucratic discourse to approve military operations and approve resources that support counter terror operations within the EU or abroad.

The EU is not well resourced to coordinate and lead military operations involving EU member states under the EU flag. Even if an operation were to be approved, the EU relies on voluntary military and economic contributions from member states since they do not own any assets or resources. No budget exists within NATO or the EU to cover operations supporting EU military missions in excess of agreed allocations.²⁰ What funding from US sources they don't get, results in a shortfall. Typically, nations will give resources to humanitarian and capacity building efforts, but in turn want or expect some sort of concession back for providing resources

which doesn't foster unity or really lead to solving the core threat. Nations want to be seen as doing something in the grand scheme whether it's Belgian F-16 fighter planes engaging ISIS targets in Syria, or French troops conducting counter terrorist operations in Mali. Terrorist enemies can use this division and separation as a way to continue to polarize and isolate European communities and draw in supporters to their global war.

NATO in the opinion of the EU should be focused on protection, responding to threats, and capability building.²¹ The EU focuses on capability building, response to humanitarian issues, and protection provided all 27 member states consent and agree. This seems as an exercise at appearing to stabilize governments such as the EU is attempting in Libya, Sudan, Yemen, and Somalia where many migrants and refugees originate. The current situation abounds in ironies.²² Europe's rejection in power politics and its devaluing military force as a tool of international relations depends on the presence of US military forces on European soil.²³ Henceforth their opinion of what NATO should be doing with respect to Europe. The reality of it all is the EU exists in the same political cycles as the US in that politicians are always looking toward the next election and trying to read the public mood at any given time. The EU military thinks the politicians must accept assumptions and scenarios that the military develop which suggest a civil/military relationship not yet defined.

Nature of the Threat

After German Chancellor Angela Merkel opened Germany's borders to refugees in September 2015 they began pouring across from the Balkans overland. ISIS used this golden opportunity to send seasoned personnel to perpetrate attacks, such as the one in France in November 2015, and to prepare for more in Belgium and Germany. It also took advantage of the new recruitment pool in Germany, convincing numerous refugees to attack the country that had

granted them asylum.²⁴ As jihadism scholar Thomas Hegghammer has found, foreign fighters who return home to launch attacks make far more effective operatives than do nonveterans.²⁵

Foreign fighters from war torn areas like Libya, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, and Somalia are exploiting the influx of Syrian refugees and those from Libya seeking asylum in European countries in order to melt into populations through migrant border crossings in the Schengen zone and through refugee camps, and local Muslim communities along the way. Their goal is to set up and organize terror cells that have the ability to carry out attacks on soft targets of opportunity, in order to spread fear, weaken governments, and undermine counterinsurgency efforts not only in the Middle East, but in Europe, and world-wide. One could conclude that foreign fighters and terrorist organizations likely distort the real image of Islam offending Muslims that want to live in peace and security within the fabric of a society.

This supports the overall global strategy of ISIS that involves near, intermediate, and far regional theaters to continue executing its mission. This is not just a local fight or where there are one off attacks in the streets of Paris, Brussels, or London. ISIS intends to expand its Caliphate and eventually incite a global apocalyptic war through framing a strategy that includes remaining and expanding across three geographic rings.²⁶ The interior ring of Iraq and Syria is the center of ISIS's campaign, the near-abroad ring includes the rest of the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, and Pakistan while the far-abroad ring includes the rest of the world, specifically Europe, the US, and Asia.²⁷

Intelligence Sharing

Intelligence sharing between nation states in the EU is not effectively synchronized between nation states. The crucial question after intelligence is collected is how the information

will be used to counter terrorist plots and threats. Security services are monitoring over 3,000 people in the United Kingdom who are suspected of being willing to commit attacks.²⁸ Britain's MI5, MI6, GCHQ (the United Kingdom's domestic, foreign, and signals intelligence agencies), and the police work together effectively; the intelligence turf wars that blight other European countries are not nearly as pronounced there.²⁹

A parliamentary commission established to examine some of France's intelligence failings provided a report in 2016 outlining several problems. The Commission's report identified an unwieldy, complex bureaucracy, with six intelligence agencies reporting to various government ministries (economic, national defense, the interior).³⁰ These agencies were collecting information with no one agency in charge, or any of them providing information that was interconnected. To help combat this issue, the commission called for the six agencies to be streamlined into one body.³¹ Although the creation of this U.S.-style National Counterterrorism Center could be a solution, one would be hard pressed to find many people in U.S. counterterrorism circles who believe that the NCTC has not been an answer.³²

The deeper problem is that Germany has virtually outsourced its signal intelligence collection to the United States, a result of a deep-rooted German mistrust of intelligence services that is a legacy of the country's experiences in the twentieth century with the Nazi Gestapo and the East German Stasi.³³ This distrust in intelligence collection from the past significantly impacts Germany's ability to handle its own national security and its capability to identify external terror threats. In Guido Steinberg's article in *Foreign Affairs*, *German Inefficiency*, he provided evidence that when the CIA and NSA provided their German colleagues with information about planned attacks, the Germans foiled them; however, when the United States

had no information, the Germans had to rely on sheer luck and the incompetence of the prospective terrorists to escape from harm.³⁴

Security and differing perceptions on what constitutes privacy complicates intelligence gathering. Ultimately, intelligence gathering will be a piecemeal process that combines different kinds of evidence from various US intelligence agencies with the intelligence agencies of its allies - most notably, Britain, France, and Israel.³⁵ The lack of reliable intelligence in apprehension of refugee smugglers and foreign fighters, impacts the ability to identify and train the right personnel and develop leadership within unstable countries like Somalia and Libya to help combat ISIS's exploitation and recruitment.

Although Khalid Masood was 52 years old, the reality is that ISIS is focusing on ever younger recruits to carry out attacks in the West and using encrypted messaging apps in order to do so.³⁶ Despite any funding increases, intelligence organizations cannot track all potential attackers. The Head of MI5 has previously stated that they can only "hit the crocodiles nearest the boat" and Masood was not regarded as an imminent threat. No security agency gets it right every time, nor can it be expected to.³⁷ How can anyone counter someone that gets in a car, drives into a crowd of pedestrians, gets out of the car, and starts wheeling a knife stabbing and slashing at anyone within reach?

Law Enforcement

The nature of this asymmetrical terrorist threat is beyond the capability and resources of France, Germany, and Belgium notwithstanding most other EU member states local law enforcement. It's not realistic to expect massive police forces to man every street corner in Paris, Berlin, or Brussels. These country police forces are not manned to surveille all suspected terrorists or terrorist cells at any given time. Choices must be made, and sometimes this results in

a dormant group of radicals falling off the local police radar only to reappear to commit a terrorist act such as happened recently in London and with the *Charlie Hebdo* attack in Paris.

The radicals carrying out the *Charlie Hebdo* attack were being watched by local law enforcement for months; however, when a larger and known ISIS group showed up in Paris, priority of resources shifted to that organization.³⁸

In Brussels, resources are an issue with not enough to be able to handle an expanded police capability. The US State Department is working with Muslim communities, but there is no integration by the police into neighborhoods.³⁹ Since the 22 March 2016 attacks in Brussels more emphasis is being placed on security with military and local police standing on street corners, but only give the appearance to be doing something related to securing the area.⁴⁰ Belgium is not placing emphasis on the real issues that contribute to the overall terrorist threat, and this doesn't help with respect to an overall law enforcement effort capable of dealing with the core issues.

Radicalization

France was the first western country to be targeted by international Middle East based Islamist terrorist networks. Radical terror cells are by far the greatest immediate security threat that the EU faces. Many of the cells are sleeper cells and/or agents waiting to be activated while leading normal lives far from any connection with terrorist activities.⁴¹ Khalid Mossed is the most recent radical terrorist connected to terrorist activities. Domestically, there is a clear trend of those with a history of petty or violent crime graduating to acts of terrorism.⁴²

Within the broader European Muslim communities certain populations appear to be more vulnerable than others to radicalization and recruitment into terrorist groups.⁴³ Those that are disaffected second or third generation British Muslims of Pakistani descent, first or second generation North Africans, and converts are particularly susceptible to radicalization and

recruitment into violent groups.⁴⁴ These groups make it particularly difficult to identify because individuals raised and educated in the west cannot be easily found to be rejecting societal values, making it more of a challenge to counterterrorism.⁴⁵

A radical's perceptions of the world are interpreted through the prism of Islamist narratives of western oppression of Muslims. Salafi doctrine provides the religious framework that is used by radical groups such as al-Qaeda.⁴⁶ Salafi has become the central way they are taught or learn about Islam in Europe and follow this particular interpretation of the Islamic religion in the West.⁴⁷ Some of the Arab and North African immigrants who became active in Islamist terrorist networks arrived in Europe as students and economic migrants while others as asylum seekers and political refugees.⁴⁸

There are many reasons why persons become radicalized and join groups like ISIS or Al Shahab. Most of these persons are young educated middle class, often unemployed who join ethno-geographic terrorist groups for companionship, fame, and promised eternal life.⁴⁹ Peer pressure is probably the most common reason a person will join a terrorist group.⁵⁰ Really they want to be a part of something that they can identify with and groups like ISIS give this to them.

Assimilation and Integration

Radicalized groups use polarizing issues in order to isolate Muslims from assimilation into western societies of France and Belgium. This negativity permeating across the two societies provide opportunity for ISIS to further their ideology. The cause of this failure of integration is twofold: Islamophobia on the part of French society and Muslim immigrants' tendency to identify more with their home communities in response. As a result, Europe is creating a class of under-employed immigrants who feel little or no connection with their host societies.⁵¹ But education correlates with political activism, and where education does not fulfill

life goals, religious clubs provide a compelling alternative, and that's where ISIS gets into the fabric of those communities. Countries shouldn't ban immigration which only energizes the ISIS narrative. Such policies are directed at the wrong targets; they are also counter-productive. They do not tackle the discrimination Muslims face when trying to integrate into their host societies, and they may even exacerbate the failure of Muslim integration by encouraging Muslims to withdraw.⁵²

Schengen Area

A contributing concern includes border security once refugees and infiltrating fighters cross over into Southern European entry states straining socio-economic capabilities to process, house, and relocate refugees. The longer refugees stay in the camps, the greater they are at risk to be radicalized by ISIS fighters either infiltrating through camps or through social media avenues. Socio-economic factors such as jobs, acceptance, and community ties are a major element in whether or not young Muslims that are seeking a better life fleeing from war torn areas will become radicalized or not. Additionally, European nations should develop better processes within their own states to address the problem of assimilation that is an element of the overall problem. Open borders only adds to the exploitation of fissures between nation states by ISIS emboldening them to further isolate the Muslim ghettos from the rest of European society.

Threat to US National Security

The Spread of radical cells and groups in Europe will continue to feed the ISIS global strategy and directly threaten the United States, Latin and South America as part of the overall global strategy of ISIS. A study by the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, a division of Spain's Defense Ministry, officially confirmed what regional observers have long noted—

namely that “Latin America represents an important region for Islamic radicalism because conditions enable the free, almost undetectable, movement of their members throughout the region.”⁵³ This is a real threat that gets to the doorstep of the United States allowing ISIS to infiltrate into the interior much like it’s doing now in Europe. Estimates in 2015 showed that fully ten percent of the 330,000 migrants monitored entering via the U.S. southern border came from countries of terrorist concern.⁵⁴ Continued freedom of movement through countries with weak or no counter terrorism laws or resources to combat against this influx will allow ISIS to exploit safe havens from which to operate and expand global network operations.

Global Theater Threat

ISIS is a brutal, capable enemy that seeks to break modern states and establish a worldwide caliphate.⁵⁵ ISIS center of gravity is its ability to spread its core message and regenerate itself into provincial areas, exploiting weaknesses in nation states. Diminished operations likely could lead to a shift to splintering of ISIS into smaller provincial groups that can metastasize within the EU, Afghanistan, Libya, and Yemen. Creation of smaller, stronger terror groups that could reemerge would further complicate the current state of affairs. Affiliated terrorist groups that fan out throughout the EU while the center of gravity, the caliphate, in Syria and Iraq weakens would provide momentum for these groups to continue the global fight. This poses a serious problem for countries like France, Belgium and Germany as their ability to combat potential terrorist adversaries across open borders stresses already limited resources, further impacting security concerns.

It seems reasonable to conclude that ISIS will continue attempting to dispatch militants back to their countries of origin to conduct attacks, increasing group morale and strengthen weak areas.⁵⁶ European governments, law enforcement, and intelligence services already stretched

thin on resources overwhelmed by a multitude of other political and economic issues will not be able to effectively combat the threat. A lack of information sharing and cooperation from other EU nations, and types of systems used to exchange information will increase a tolerance of attacks in Paris, London, Brussels, and Berlin where reaction and not pro-action dominates. The current state of affairs of course is unacceptable; however, ISIS will continue to press on with more emboldened attacks if not stopped.

Weak Responses to the Problem

The United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants held on September 19, 2016 called for a crisis response that goes beyond humanitarian aid to embrace employment and education but does not address the core security crisis facing Europe and the United States today. The Leaders' Summit on Refugees, hosted by U.S. President Barack Obama sought enhanced work rights for refugees amid other massive increases in refugee assistance, but did not address the core security crisis issue. Although this may have shed light on how employment and education are aspects related to potential radicalization, but does not get at the core security concerns. The problem looks different depending on whether you are in European, American or from the Middle East. The EU is now trying to implement a deal similar to the one they struck with Turkey in order to mitigate the tide of refugees coming from Libya. For the past two years Europe leaders have expressed a hope that refugees and migrants can stay put in their countries. Little has been done by Germany other than Chancellor Merkel's call for stopping the smugglers of migrants. Nothing has come of this, only the appearance of doing something to improve the situation.⁵⁷

The European Union agreed in mid-February 2017 on a 10-point plan to prevent more tragedies in the Mediterranean of refugees trying to enter Europe. The 10 points put forward by the European Commission and backed by EU foreign and interior ministers at a meeting in Luxembourg that include reinforcing the EU's maritime patrolling operations in the Mediterranean. Extend their scope to patrol a wider area of sea, make a systematic effort to capture and destroy vessels used by the people smugglers. Meet regularly and work closely to gather information on how the smugglers operate. Trace smugglers funds and help investigate them. Deploy teams in Italy and Greece for joint processing of asylum applications. Fingerprint all migrants and consider options for an "emergency relocation mechanism" for migrants. Launch a voluntary pilot project on resettling refugees across the EU. Establish a new return program for rapid return of "irregular" migrants. Engage with countries surrounding Libya through a joint effort between the Commission and the EU's diplomatic service. Deploy immigration liaison officers abroad to gather intelligence on migratory flows and strengthen the role of the EU delegations.

None of these 10 points proposed by the European Commission addresses the core security problem faced by the Europe today. Neither do they focus on dealing with a core ISIS global threat. The points only go as far as treating the issue weakly in humanitarian terms, and largely through dialog and meetings without actionable outcomes. Many of the points put forward that have action associated with them that will require resources which may or may not be available. It will take an organization with the capabilities and organizational structure and ready resources in order to tackle the immediate and longer term problem that additional refugees will place on the EU not to mention the threat of infiltrating radicals bent on recruiting additional soldiers for the fight against the west.

What Progress is Being Made?

Radical Islamist terror is not really something that is treated as other than a national issue for most Europeans directly affected by terrorism. Progress being made against core ISIS strongholds in Iraq is too early to tell whether or not this progress will be able to sustain itself. Europeans are not concerned so much about this in their daily lives as concerns that limited social resources are being consumed by refugees.⁵⁸ Little progress is being made toward Muslim refugees and migrants assimilating into host societies where they are living. All things considered, the problem is not viewed as a theater or global issue requiring a coherent plan involving a coalition response.

Since the beginning of the operation to retake Mosul, Deir ez-Zor a lesser-known province in Syria's southeast near the Iraqi border has seen a serious influx of ISIS fighters and their families from both Iraq and Syria.⁵⁹ Because of its location and surrounding geography it provides strategic significance for ISIS between the cities of Mosul and Raqqa. Additionally, oil in the area provides ISIS with the financial means to continue their global theater fight. These factors go well beyond the ability of any single country in the European Union to combat a threat of that magnitude.

Syria which borders Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey is an exceptionally complex and pivotal part of the Middle East.⁶⁰ Under President Obama's administration, the situation in Syria became somewhat chaotic in that following the failure in Libya, the Islamist State began to gain a strong foothold in the region. They made deals with the local tribal leaders, and took advantage of the discord created out of the U.S. backed rebels fighting the Assad regime. Wholesale regime change is not necessarily the best of strategies as Libya turned out.

Unfortunately the red-line policy of the Obama administration and subsequent appeasement in the region has only emboldened the enemy.

Elements of Syria are bound together for security and are relevant to stability in Europe. It's worth trying to understand the different factions, and tribal nature of the borders between Iraq and Syria. Nationalist, religious, and tribal factions are all in a caldron ready to boil over. If Assad is taken out, the whole region will explode into a world-wide war. As progress is made in eliminating ISIS strong holds, countries like Tunisia experiences the fall out problems with Islamic State fighters returning from the field in Syria and Iraq. Currently Tunisia represents the largest origin of foreign jihadist fighters in Iraq and Syria. The city of in Ben Guerdane represents the town in southeastern Tunisia that is one of the world's biggest exporters of jihadists.⁶¹ Progress if you can call it that, is slow and will take a long time.

Since declaring a state of emergency, France has been using a system that dates back to the early 1960s where law enforcement leads efforts within defined spheres. Similar to a guerilla insurgency, and as the breakdown of ISIS continues, the coalition fighting ISIS must continue to pursue a multipronged strategy aggressively targeting splintered cells through capture and kill operations to prevent further metastasizing.⁶² This approach, if pursued, needs to be combined with efforts to promote good governance and reduce corruption in fragile states, promoting assimilation of migrants into society, while building the partner capacity of security forces in the most affected countries.⁶³ NATO is the only international organization able to work across lines between countries and able to deal on multiple fronts at the same time to combat ISIS.

NATO

NATO is seen as and is the organization that acts as the central force keeping Europe organized, safe, secure, and together. NATO is seen as the primary security mechanism developing and maintaining cooperative partnership, political, and economic organization in Europe while executing military missions.⁶⁴ In many cases the NATO brand is not used within the EU in order to message in a way that gives member nations that are supporting the alliance recognition. Military advice in Europe is highly politicized and it's hard to gain consensus. Europeans want peace but prepare for war relying on a US led NATO delegitimizing the EU as a serious hard power national entity that can further U.S. desires for a secure Europe.

NATO is a coalition of the willing with branding being a central element that NATO effectively manages and serves US policy interests. Political messaging versus actual performance is tied to military response that often relies on political necessity.⁶⁵ NATO and the EU are complimentary and viewed by the US as a strategic opportunity. Whether or not it is about an agreement that a nation state gives up sovereignty in order to attain some sort of sense of security, NATO works with the EU at integrating missions within the fabric of differing perceptions. Without NATO at their side for assurance, the EU cannot secure or sustain itself militarily. NATO is the only organization that can build the coalition necessary for countering the regional and global terrorist threat.

NATO is the only global organization that can get European nations to work together, build coalitions and alliances, and possesses the critical advantage in dealing with partner nations. A United States led NATO could address security concerns related to the immediate refugee crisis in Syria. Pooling resources at the source along with vetting in refugee camps where foreign fighters are using the camps as launch points into Europe, will make those returning from battlefields in Libya, Syria, and Iraq to home countries such as France, Tunisia, and Germany

more difficult to penetrate southern EU borders. NATO military capabilities can be leveraged even though NATO is not set up to be a border guard force within international policy.

Utilizing NATO's military capabilities to help secure southern borders through intercepting returning foreign fighters will likely mitigate the ability of these bad guys from crossing into the borderless EU. If foreign fighter infiltration is not stopped, radical groups along with ISIS will continue to grow theater-wide networks and inspire terror cells that will turn European countries into police states, weakening government and creating the potential to overthrow nation states and potentially turning them into regional ISIS spheres of influence. NATO is the only global organization that can manage and eventually stop source countries like Libya, Iraq, and Syria, from allowing non-vetted foreign fighters from slithering into the fabric of Europe.

Recently, NATO Secretary Jens Stoltenberg pledge in a press conference with US President Donald Trump that NATO can, and must, do more in the global fight against terrorism.⁶⁶ Although promising, NATO cannot detain individuals within the current construct of European nation's laws. In order for the NATO to do more in the counter terrorism fight within Europe, they must be able to do policing within cities and neighborhoods. Someone needs to take a look at how NATO can be empowered to detain individuals suspected of carrying out potential terrorist acts, and allowing NATO the ability to enter neighborhoods in Paris and Brussels to integrate within the populations and police those suspected of operating in radicalized cells or plotting violent acts.

Recommendations

NATO is the only organization that has the means to effectively deal with the current European crisis from root to branch. Their geopolitical position makes them a barrier against terrorism in a variety of regions. Unless the EU is able to build a cohesive plan to improve security and counter terrorist threats, the battle will continue to drift into the terrorist favor. NATO has the ability to build links to member nations to develop common understanding and leadership required to attack ISIS center of gravity. NATO is an organization that can keep European countries aligned and focused on long term weakening and/or defeat of radical terrorist groups, and their overall global strategy.

A US led NATO can bring together nation states such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco together with Europe to thwart regional ISIS security threats. It can effectively work through differences and build the necessary coalitions with cooperation to work together in disrupting, degrading, and defeating ISIS at the source. NATO has the regional capability in the Baltic Sea region, Black Sea area, and can engage alliance members to leverage available resources. NATO can define the global counter ISIS mission and develop the lines of effort required and interoperability required to attack their strengths. A U.S. led NATO would be the best choice under the auspices of the United Nations to employ TTPs, military equipment, training, and mobilization to support security operations.

Radical groups and individuals are able to communicate effectively using modern encryption technology. NATO can coordinate efforts across Europe to disrupt communication between ISIS leadership directing operations of cells within the EU. This is becoming a global

theater security concern in magnitude and scale that European nation states are unable to cope with individually. Disrupting communication between ISIS networks, terrorist groups, and radicals is critical to disrupting coordination of terrorist activity. No other organization is equipped to coordinate, manage, and resource such an effort like NATO.

Conclusion

A United States led NATO is resourced and capable of managing the core issue at its source, and building the coalition necessary to deal with the global nature of the threat. Similar to fighting a hydra, a U.S. led NATO could defeat ISIS, but likely be confronted by another emerging group, or smaller cells.⁶⁷ Regardless, NATO is an organization that can develop a comprehensive strategy to deal with an emerging situation as provincial groups disperse regionally once ISIS is ejected from Syria and Iraq. NATO has the intelligence capabilities, military resources, and connection to US regional commands that can unify efforts across the globe that the EU does not possess. NATO can leverage European capabilities to focus on increasing internal security issues related to the Schengen border area, assimilation and integration of populations in France, Belgium, and Britain to include working toward countering radicalization efforts of ISIS through education and training.

NATO's ability to train, equip, and fund operations vastly outpaces the ability of the European Union to do the same on a regional or even a global level as part of the global strategy. NATO can leverage member capabilities to counter encryption technology used by ISIS to aid in their communication between networks and recruiting efforts. They can train weaker nations such as Libya, Yemen, and Somalia in countering terrorist activities, and identifying road side IEDs. NATO's ability to coordinate among its members and those in Middle East can bring

further expertise and resources to bear against the ISIS threat to identify the networks inside their countries, how to share information, and protect the citizens without causing ill feelings within existing communities. NATO can work with local, state, national, and international organizations, synchronizing systems, and efforts across the globe. Someone needs to look into the issue NATO has with respect to detaining individuals and work out a structure within the EU to allow NATO to conduct policing actions alongside local police municipalities. Lastly, perceptions are important and under a NATO flag, the counterterrorism effort would not be seen as the US exerting its position or influence, but incorporating coalition partner nations opinions and efforts in a combined campaign.



Notes

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